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### The Experience of a Lifestyle

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## Chapter 7: The Experience of a Lifestyle

The theming of everyday life has reached at least a temporary apogee. No longer is the intensely narrated experience of space exclusive to the theme park; backstories engineered to affect moods, organize movement, and compel engagement have moved first to the realm of retail design, then to urban redevelopment, and most recently to health and palliative care facilities. From the experience of shopping to the experience of dementia and the experience of death,<sup>1</sup> the narrative control of an individual's experience is arguably central to commercial success. As a result, today's commercial design practices, from real estate development to urban planning and from architecture to industrial design, have responded, borrowing design techniques and spatial planning logics from the entertainment industry examples we have just seen. When the mall becomes a lifestyle village; the hospital, a lifestyle enhancement center; and the Alzheimer's treatment center, a memory care center, there is more than euphemism at work. It is certainly fair to say that the intents of these changes are often beneficent, and in the case of dementia care, even noble, but the convergence of experiential concern with the commercial intents of the entertainment industry does raise some significant questions that don't appear to be addressed in any of the highly promotional literature that accompanies their advance. In particular, questions concerning the commercial origins of the Experience Economy seem highly relevant, as they mark one of the first transitions toward the infusion of entertainment-industry models into the world beyond the theme park.

In 1995, the Washington D.C.-based Urban Land Institute, an international research, education, and advocacy group heavily supported by commercial real estate interests, officially declared the birth of the urban entertainment destination, or UED. These projects, which use entertainment "as an anchor or as a magnet to enhance retail, hospitality, residential, or mixed use development" (Beyard and Rubin 1995: 6) were born out of the sudden rediscovery of the spatial value of entertainment, and represent one of the most important ancestors of the Experience Economy. The strategic placement of entertainment

centers in urban contexts was, of course, nothing new by the 1990s. Western cities have relied upon formalized entertainment for centuries, and the modern city has consistently incorporated theaters, arcades, sport clubs and fields, panoramas, themed restaurants, and amusement parks as central aspects of their organization (Hannigan 1998; Klein 2004). But there apparently was something new and radical about the UED. Between 1994 and 1995 “nearly every major entertainment company has established development teams to evaluate, plan, or develop UED’s” (Beyard and Rubin 1995: 6). There was more than just a bandwagon involved; the UED represented a serious investment potential with very few precedents. Michael Wolf, a media and entertainment consultant and pop economist, calls this infusion of “entertainment content” the “E-Factor,” (1999: 50), attributing its inspiration to the fall of soviet communism and end of the Cold War:

You make a missile, and the defense manufacturer gets paid, its workers get paid, a few officers get paid, and then the missile sits there in the silo gathering dust. You make a movie, on the other hand, and you can potentially release it again and again (try doing that with a missile after it’s exploded). Next, it can be released on video. It can play on network television and cable and overseas. It can sell related dolls, lunch boxes, sound-track albums. You can send it out on the Web when real-time video hits the Internet. Years from now, you can send it out again to a nostalgia-crazed marketplace.

(Wolf 1999: 6)

What changed between the urban entertainment of the 19th century and that of the late 20th is the commercial savvy of the entertainment industry, especially as it grasped the value-added nature of these product tie-ins, including the value of spatial diversification. But if part of the reason the industries supporting the cold-war retooled themselves into entertainment machines in the 1990s was to profit from the non-physical, informed nature of entertainment, why would entertainment developers venture into the difficult territory of territory itself? What value is to be gained from literally grounding the fluid media of entertainment content? The E-Factor, manifesting the ability for traditional (or “bricks and mortar”) industries to increase their fluidity, promotes, in fact, a way to make territories themselves appear fluid in the branding strategies of an entertainment corporation. An entertainment brand that is architecturalized has the capacity to both embed itself in everyday life in a way that a mere image or product may not, and escape the static attributes of a non-branded, non-entertaining real estate investment. Alternatively, while spaces and the architecture which occupies them may just sit there, gaining or losing value from volatile local real estate markets, fluid E-Content travels virtually without borders, gaining value through a complex set of mechanisms completely separate from those which determine the values of material goods. An ESPN Zone store, for example, is not only a sports bar, but as a tourist attraction, provides an immersive environment for Disney to promote the ESPN brand, which in turn supports

increased viewership at visitors' homes around the world. It is the urban entertainment destination which laid the groundwork, as well as provided the spatial context, for the invention of the ESPN Zone. An entertainment center, in addition to manifesting a brand through typical iconographic means, can easily become an accidental background in various media representations; its greater permanence than a disposable object grounds its trademarks in everyday routines; and its physically inhabitable scale opens up opportunities for immersive branding that no product can offer with the same ease. Adding entertainment content to a typically non-entertaining facility adds distinction, sets a company apart, and, according to Wolf, fills the eyeballs of millions seeking short-term, user-controlled, instantly gratifying distractions (Wolf 1999: 16, 30–48). By injecting the E-Factor into bricks-and-mortar investments, companies are able to diversify their holdings, enter the global information marketplace, and make people have fun all at the same time. These are none other than the architectural implications of George Ritzer's "McDonaldization of Society" (1992) carried into the brand-happy world of late 20th-century marketing, with an added touch of entertaining distraction.

Wolf's book was published in the same year as Pine's and Gilmore's *The Experience Economy*, and while their point is fundamentally the same, Pine and Gilmore stress that the new economic model is not exclusively based on entertainment:

Because so many exemplars of staged experiences come from what the popular press loosely calls the entertainment industry, it's easy to conclude that shifting up the Progression of Economic Value to stage experiences simply means adding entertainment to existing offerings. That would be a gross understatement. Remember that staging experiences is not about entertaining customers, it's about *engaging* them.

(Pine and Gilmore 1999b: 30)

With staging as their operative framework, they immediately establish the spatiality of the relationships between actor and audience, front stage and back, stage right and left, theater and everyday life, as central aspects of the presentation of commercially driven experiences. By expanding Wolf's argument, they present a more helpful analysis of the spatial drive of the entertainment economy. To the extent that the E-Factor (and here we can take that "E" to mean either Entertainment or Experience) arguably injects commercial value to an enterprise, it does so exclusively because it occurs in physical space, requires active spatial engagement by customers and employees, and locally grounds the intangible effects of a global brand. The stage (and here "all the world is a stage" is taken literally) is the grounding point for the future of the service economy. For a service exchange to engage the customer, it must be staged, and to be staged, quite simply, there must be a stage. This stage, and the provision thereof, are the space of commercial activity, of exchange, and of immersive experience. It is the very site of scenographic design, visual intrusion management, and the other



techniques of narrative detailing. As with the theatrical metaphors of Erving Goffman, whose work is periodically cited in *The Experience Economy*, the roles played by individuals construct, and are constructed by, the spaces in which they occur. A mature understanding of the value of the spatial context is thus powerfully implicit, while seldom acknowledged, in the experiential analysis of the new economy.

## LOCATION-BASED EXPERIENCE

John Hannigan, in *Fantasy City: Pleasure and Profit in the Postmodern Metropolis*, pinpoints the birth of so-called “location-based entertainment” ventures in response to urban redevelopment efforts as early as the 1970s (Hannigan 1999: 51–4). While this may be accurate within the context of late capitalism Hannigan studies, a more thorough history of location-based entertainment could locate its birth in the 19th-century prototypes of the modern shopping mall. As we have seen, many of the strategies of the narrative environment rely on a sense of narrative and physical enclosure. With the desire to deploy extreme narratives beyond the theme park came a need to find a commercial form architecturally and programmatically sympathetic to such enclosure. The modern shopping mall was a perfect mate. What has been often argued to be the first prototype of the modern western mall, the Palais Royal in central Paris, could in fact easily be referred to as an urban entertainment destination. This palace, built originally by Cardinal Richelieu in the 17th century, became a locus of public commercial activity after the French Revolution, when the Duc D'Orléans expanded it and leased space in its grand arcades:

The Palais Royal contained reading rooms, bookstores, small food markets for the cosmopolitan palate . . . It contained furniture stores, jewelry and fashion shops, souvenir shops, pottery, tobacco, perfume, and antiques. It has restaurants of all categories, cafés, gambling rooms, a stock exchange, a real estate agency, betting offices, brothels for all inclinations, and countless apartments and attic rooms for rent . . . This direct connection between business, consumerism, entertainment, politics, and information within a space protected from the traffic and the weather, that is, this direct unification of such heterogeneous functions, explains the significant role played by the Palais Royal not only in the Revolution of 1789 but also in the public life of the following decades.

(Geist 1983 [1979]: 458)

Subsequent conversions of congested alleys or newly cut slices through the dense medieval fabric of the city center imitated the function of the Palais Royal, but enforced a kind of intimacy lacking in the Palais due to their ad hoc deployment (Figure 7.1). Their intimacy was primarily a result of their desire to maximize real-estate options in the overcrowded core of central Paris, but contributed greatly to the understanding of the modern shopping experience. The growing

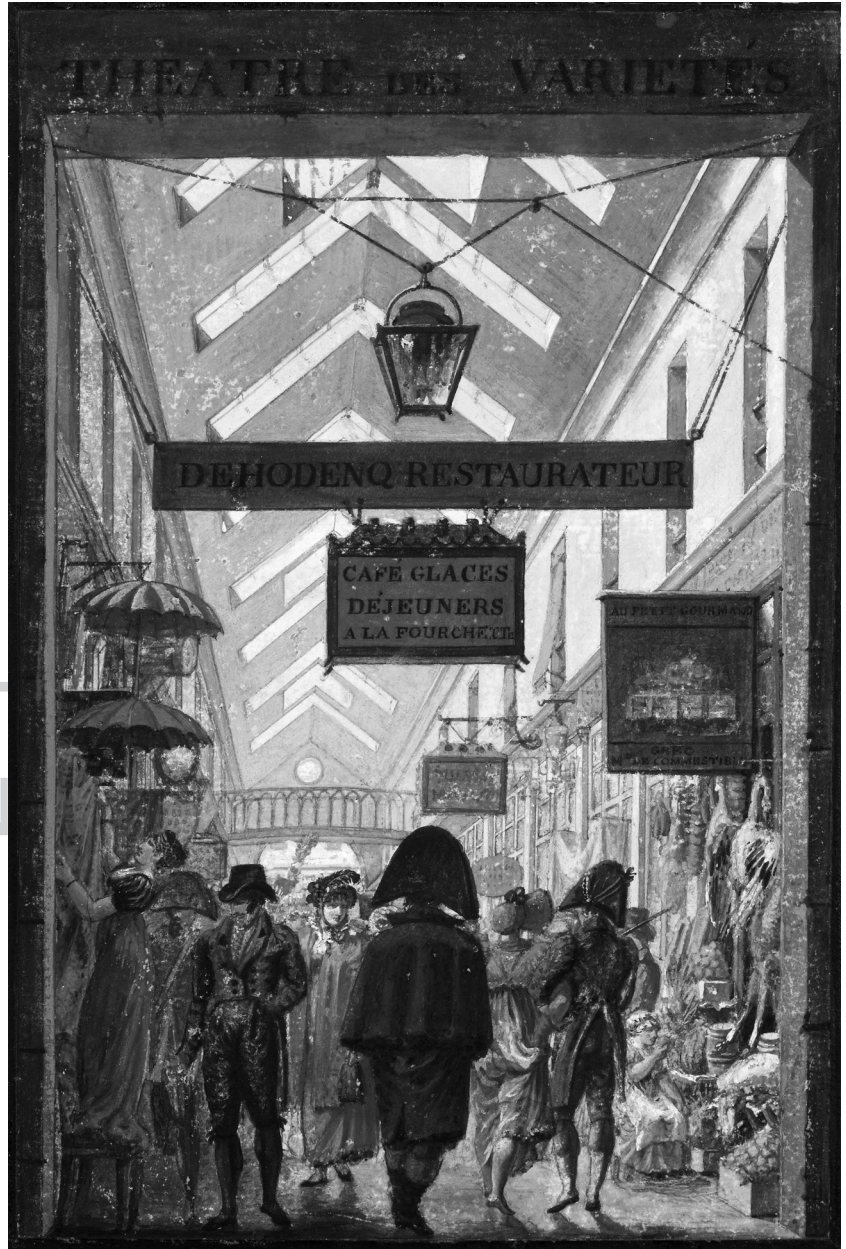


Figure 7.1  
 Philibert Louis  
 Debuycourt's "Le  
 passage des  
 Panoramas à Paris," 1807.  
 Gouache, 24,5 × 16,5 cm.  
 Musée de la Ville de  
 Paris, Musée  
 Carnavalet, Paris, France.  
 Photograph Credit:  
 Erich Lessing / Art  
 Resource, NY.

popularity of these early arcades as sites of consumption, leisure, and flâneurie led to the creation of more monumental and aesthetically designed environments by the 1820s, when the arcade was seen as a target of considerable speculation. In the subsequent half-decade, the arcade evolved from an ad hoc retail speculation to an architectural typology. As it increased in scale, the once intimate arcade was replaced by a monumental internalization of the grand boulevards of the late 19th century. Monumental façades (Figure 7.2) were



Figure 7.2  
*The Galleria Vittorio Emanuele, Milan;*  
*Giuseppe Mengoni*  
*architect.*  
Courtesy of the TDR  
Collection, School of  
Architecture, Carleton  
University.

attached to the interiors of existing city blocks, effectively creating a new world of interior commercial inhabitation, made not only for walking through, but for enjoying as urban space, for an *al fresco* coffee, a street performance, or public debate (Geist 1983 [1979]: 392). While internalized, these spaces remained open to the air, often with their entrances intentionally aligned to major public places or monuments. Primarily a Western European typology, these galleria



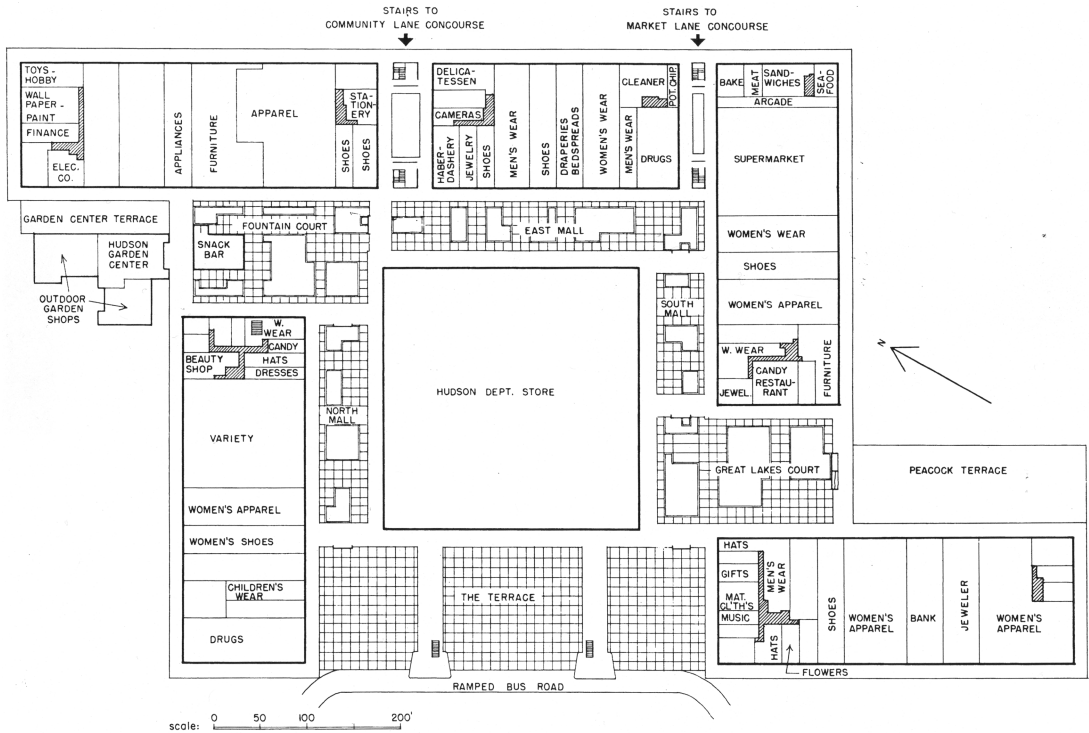


Figure 7.3  
*Merchandising Plan for  
 Northland Center  
 Detroit; Victor Gruen,  
 architect.*  
 Courtesy Gruen  
 Associates.

were as much responding to the spirit of public space as they were to increasing desires for commercial privatization.

The radical interiorization of the mall did not occur until the mid-20th century, and its locus was primarily in the United States. Through the work most famously of Victor Gruen, the arcade became surrounded by automobile parking and was completely closed to the weather. The once monumental openings to the city became enclosed by large anchor stores, themselves also interiorized by the 1950s. The work of Victor Gruen in the suburbs of Detroit, Michigan, and Minneapolis, Minnesota, for example, is particularly revealing. Generally considered the “father of the enclosed mall,” Gruen saw his development of the (increasingly) enclosed mall a response to the demands for a new kind of collective space on the part of the post-war suburban resident (Hardwick 2004). His first shopping malls, as a result, were not at all enclosed, and he took pride in their outdoor, semi-public spaces (Figure 7.3). Later Gruen malls became increasingly enclosed, like Southdale near Minneapolis, Minnesota (Figure 7.4), which is considered the first fully enclosed mall, but even these present a very different face toward the pedestrian “street” than do contemporary malls. Only much later, in response to increasing demands for control, weather protection, and increased parking, did the mall become a windowless interior space. (As a side note, it is a bit humorous how the recent enclosures of the early open-air Gruen malls contend with his more public open-air designs. In some cases, as early as the 1970s, many open-air malls had their outdoor passages covered



over, and/or filled in with additional stores. One mall, Northland Center, has struggled to maintain a small fragment of the original Gruen design as a distinguishing amenity (Figure 7.5). Unsurprisingly, nothing of the original gesture toward an urban public remains, as the once meandering space has become a fully surrounded courtyard.)

It is at this point in history, when the 1970s mall becomes a banal warehouse of stores, that Hannigan's account becomes salient. While the proper birth of location-based entertainment may lie in the 18th century, in a sense, we owe the revitalization of the public entertainment function present in the Palais Royal to the work of commercial developers in the 1970s. Developer James Rouse's "Festival Marketplace" idea, initiated with Boston's Faneuil Hall in 1976 and since replicated throughout the US, led in part to a renewed interest in redeveloping inner cities through the renovation of disused marketplaces, train stations, waterfronts, industrial areas, or old entertainment districts. These "newly" conceived malls saw the spectacle of the public festival as a potential attractor for the consumer's dollars. Entertainment was provided mostly by way of banners, bright colors, and a scattered theater or two. As the Festival Marketplace evolved into the urban entertainment destination in the 1980s, however, the scientific and highly narrative business logics of Wolf's entertainment economy set in. The synergies between real estate, broadcast media, film, and retail companies which both Hannigan and Wolf describe (with, respectively, more and less detail and

Figure 7.4  
*An Interior 'streetscape'  
of Southdale Shopping  
Center, Edina,  
Minnesota; Victor  
Gruen, architect.*  
Photograph courtesy  
Gruen Associates and  
Warren Reynolds,  
Infinity Inc.

Figure 7.5  
*"The Courtyard", a vestige from the Northland Shopping Center outdoor pedestrian arcade.*  
 This courtyard was once interconnected to a series of other outdoor spaces, serving as one of the many public gathering spots of the original Northland design. It has since been surrounded by the enclosure of the mall. In Figure 7.3, it is located in the "Great Lakes Court," just to the bottom-right of the Hudson Department Store. Photograph courtesy Jakki Grant, Northland Center.



scholarship) thus saw the placement of entertainment features as a crucial aspect of the success of many of these new urban ventures. The publisher of *Urban Land*, the self-promotional journal of the Urban Land Institute, offers his version of the historical evolution of the UED:

Crystal palaces and expositions were the hallmarks of the Victorian era; legitimate theaters, vaudeville houses, and amusement parks were the stars of the 1900s and 1910s; the first motion pictures with sound were features in the movie palaces of the 1920s and 1930s; and TV and family theme parks dominated entertainment from the 1950s to 1980s. For the 1990s and the next millennium, the combination of live and participatory entertainment, innovative film applications, simulation rides (more than hard rides), and high-tech wizardry will make up urban entertainment destinations.

(Spink 1995: 4)

The popular rise of this new development form suggests, as Hannigan points out, that new corporate synergies and syntheses had entered the retail development landscape. M. Christine Boyer offers a brief historical context for the festival marketplace-cum-urban entertainment destination in her detailed examination of another of James Rouse's projects: "Cities for Sale: Merchandising History at South Street Seaport" (Boyer 1992). She places these urban developments in the narrative imaging spectacles of the 19th century: the window display, the panorama, the amusement spectacle. She calls the Festival Marketplace an exercise in "Picture Writing," referring implicitly to the urban imaging theories of Kevin Lynch. When commercialized, these imaging strategies are one of the most profoundly directed ways to promote well-managed and financially calculated retail narratives. As I have mentioned earlier, author Norman Klein (2004) labels

these outgrowths of the baroque function of the 19th-century spectacle “scripted spaces,” where commercialized image is turned into a didactic script for the “proper” occupation of space.

What is architecturally significant about recent commercial forays like the UED is that they have the effect of bringing this narrative, through the spatial metaphors of the stage and screen, to a wider variety of services and locales than had previously been considered. While 19th-century urban entertainment ventures did attempt to create entertainment destinations, they lacked the scientific retail and marketing logics of the 20th century which commoditized the form and social program of urban entertainment. Boyer reveals that Rouse’s 1983 South Street Seaport project

is really an outdoor advertisement that narrates a story about trade and commodities, and these narratives of adventure and conquest fill out the more intangible nostalgic desires of the consumer. This subtle form of advertising blurs the distinction between the atmospheric stage-set and the commodities on sale, for its well-constructed historic tableau not only enhances the products on display but locks the spectator into a larger-than-life store/story.

(Boyer 1992: 202)

Under these new marketing and mercantilist development protocols, major parts of city centers were themed to support entertainment brands, theme park spatial logics were deployed in shopping malls and individual retail establishments, and the spatial tenets of the Experience Economy refigured the services of the service economy. The role of Klein’s *scripted space* took on new prominence, as it supported not only the entertainment function of the new experiential retail landscape, but its rational-scientific logic supported the financial interests of retail developers taking great risks moving into an unknown development model. The patterns, landmarks, nodes, radii, mean distances, demographic distributions, and statistical models of mid-century spatial science became a foundation upon which stories would unfold via the spatial movements and sensory distractions of a consumer. With entertainment conglomerates clearly in the picture, the missing link between the economic development of everyday space and the storytelling desires of media entertainers was forged.

After the Festival Marketplace model lost steam among the development community in the late 1980s, due principally to financial failures with many of the developments, the typology was altered and rebranded, with a wave of entertainment-industry support, as the urban entertainment destination. Clearly seen by those in the industry as a part of the historical continuum of themed ventures, UEDs represented a new product line for developers that combined the humdrum urban retail center with entertainment amenities prototyped in the theme park environment. Arguably little more than outdoor shopping malls with a few entertainment-focused stores (branded theaters, arcades, stores marketing movie tie-ins, etc.), the first UEDs like the renovated Third Street Promenade in Santa Monica (opened in 1989) and Yerba Buena Gardens in San Francisco



(opened in 1993) stood at the transition point of urban revitalization using entertainment industry techniques. These two developments represent an end to the era of less explicitly themed UEDs, as new ground was broken with Universal Studio's 1993 CityWalk (Figure 7.6). This project by the Jerde Partnership undertook a rigorous cross-pollination of the urban pedestrian retail center model and theme park. Located on the civically unincorporated land now owned by Vivendi Corporation called Universal City, CityWalk's adjacency to the



Figure 7.6  
*Universal CityWalk at  
 Universal Studios  
 Hollywood; The Jerde  
 Partnership, architect.*  
 Photograph by Brian  
 Lonsway.



Universal Studio Hollywood Theme Park and film production facilities guaranteed its E-Factor. The idea for its construction came quite pragmatically out of a desire to fill an empty space between the entrance of the 18-screen Universal Cinema and the entrance of the Universal Studio theme park and studio backlot tour. Prior to CityWalk's construction in 1993, visitors to either of these destinations would park between them in a large parking lot and visit either one or the other attraction, especially as the cinemas attracted a more local and regular clientèle than the theme park. In the first two years of its opening, patronage to the cinemas was up 60 percent, and to the studio tour, 15 percent, a fact which has been used to bolster corporate support of the UED typology (Fader 1995: 22).

CityWalk, integrating ostensibly entertaining signage, themed décor in all its venues, and architectural devices borrowed from Universal's film and television set-making experience, attempts to provide a feeling of urban density outside of the urban context. At its core, a very blunt architectural strategy is used: all buildings are built to appear approximately one and a half times the typical scale of a street façade.<sup>2</sup> CityWalk differs radically from its patriarch in that it has attempted to create an extreme narrative not within the private confines of a theme park (although it is just on the border of one: Universal Studios Hollywood), but in the semi-public context of a shopping street. At the same time that the urban theme of CityWalk works for the establishment of heterogeneous consistency, it hinders its designers' efforts from establishing an appropriate sense of enclosure. Citywalk's use of a magnified building scale attempts to provide enclosure through a feeling of urban density by blocking out surrounding views. Yet its urban image is quite true to form (even with its scalar exaggeration), and brings with it – or at least alludes to the possibility of bringing with it – all the potential risks of urban threat. In other words, it visually and logistically exists more as a part of urban reality than thematic escape, and must compensate for its feigned urbanity through the manifestation of security in other ways. This particular UED is very much like a mall, and therefore resorts to more visible and typical forms of establishing the requisite sense of security: security guards, visible rule postings, and unconcealed security cameras. While CityWalk is in central Los Angeles, it is quite remote from the kind of urban experience it attempts to promote. Yet, it presents the city as its predominant theme. It attempts to mimic the visual overload of an urban experience just enough to make its occupants feel the sense of excitement that an urban core is supposed to contain, but without the concomitant risks. CityWalk is architecturally modeled on a suburban strip-mall first and foremost; but by taking its thematic cues – its experiential referents – from the city core, it offers a theme that is specifically relevant to contemporary everyday life (unlike the nostalgic theme of the Festival Marketplace). This theme presents city life outside of the city: a polished, organized, and secured representation.

Following upon CityWalk's financial success, the urban theme became more common in UEDs, even for those in dense urban environments themselves

(consider The New Times Square in New York City, for example: an on-site retheming of Times Square itself (New York State Urban Development Corporation 1993; Roost 1998).<sup>3</sup> Such themed urban developments are increasingly filled with authorized street performers scheduled to randomly appear, vendors who are allowed to sell their wares in physically mobile but logistically immobile carts, and restaurants which open onto outdoor “street-side” patios with no street nearby, all attempting to create a sense of a city’s dynamic life without the aleatory difference of a traditional city. At the service of retail and tourist economies, CityWalk and its urban-themed progeny require the ability to provide to their guests a sense of security, and so borrow urban signifiers only as appropriate. For many, especially historical, themes, this has posed problems, as the technologies and systems required for such security visually intrude upon the historical theme. By thematizing the contemporary city, however, the potential for such intrusions is inherently eliminated. In an essay from a 1994 issue of *Urban Land* (Rubin, Gorman, and Lawry 1994: 64), the executives of a management consulting firm describe three approaches to theming for UEDs: scripted themes, theme-enhancement, and multitheming. The urban theme provides the opportunity to engage all three of these methods, combining the control of intensive scripting with the added value of theme enhancements and the commercially productive benefits of the distractions of multiple themes. For an urban theme to “feel” urban, for example, it must embrace differentiation within its well-managed composition (“sanitized razzmatazz” in Hannigan’s words (1999: 67)), thus moving beyond the solitary highly scripted theme into something ostensibly more loose, something multithemed. Yet, the script must be maintained to provide a controlled and consistent experience. CityWalk provides this scripting via the instrumentalization of urban markers. By storyboarding visual experiences, the Jerde Partnership created experiential episodes which unfold into an urban narrative, or script, which shoppers have a proclivity to follow. And thematic enhancement is provided by overblown physical cues. The signage (of which there are more than retail establishments) first draws attention to the edgy (but secure) garishness of an urban entertainment district; the over-scaled architectural details heighten one’s sense of immersion; the rotunda serves as an orientational landmark, much like a grand public plaza or major intersection, and frames privileged views of either the cinema megaplex or the studio theme park. While nothing is particularly architecturally radical in all of this, what is innovative is the amalgamation of these thematic models. By combining scripted design with entertainment attraction and pedestrian retail in an urban theme, the Jerde Partnership unveiled a prototype soon to influence urban design projects around the world. As well, it placed its own practice at the helm of these developments, creating a near synonym between “urban redevelopment” and the “Jerde UED.”

As a model of urban redevelopment, however, CityWalk had one major problem: it was not immersed in an urban context. While it initiated a new breed of UED, it remained an entity disconnected from a residential fabric, and connected exclusively to entertainment attractions (a movie theater and a theme

park). The real desire of the UED developer was to see such thematic developments refigure urban land, setting up potentials for gentrification, reinvigorating disused waterfronts as high-end shopping districts, or stimulating the return of tourists to waning downtown cores. While projects done prior to CityWalk did situate themselves in downtown centers (in addition to the Yerba Buena Center and the Third Street Promenade, Baltimore's Inner Harbor, Miami's CocoWalk, and Underground Atlanta are some of the more notable), these were less emphatically narrative, themed, or scripted. It is specifically because it was developed as an appendage of a theme park by an entertainment company that CityWalk represents a critical hinge between the controlled scripting in a theme park and the more subtly constructed narrative about to unfold in urban retail developments.

## LIFESTYLE EXPERIENCE

While all this was transpiring in the world of retail, new concepts were entering the landscape of residential development. Seaside Florida, a new town designed by Andreas Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk in the late 1970s, placed the tenets of a new model of city design on the real estate development radar. As this town developed through the 1980s, new "new" towns were modeled on ideas that began collectively to be known as "New Urbanism." Reston Town Center broke ground in 1990, in the already vaguely New Urbanist Reston, VA (founded in the 1970s), introducing the idea of the from-scratch "downtown" to the real estate development portfolio. With Seaside, Reston Town Center, and Disney's completely new town development, Celebration, Florida, developers were well prepared to consider the planning and development of complete towns as a significant part of their investment portfolio. For the retail component of these downtowns, developers were increasingly inspired by entertainment-industry synergies. Through these trajectories, the UED began to slowly evolve into today's lifestyle village.<sup>4</sup> An extension of the shopping center, the lifestyle village restyles the urban theme into one of demographic-specific consumption. It also marks a significant advance of narrative scripting into the realm of everyday life. Two industry executives describe the lifestyle village as being "Modeled after Main Street, U.S.A." (Scholl and Williams 2005), using the metaphor of Disney's themed land to meld together references to traditional town centers and the theme-park version thereof. In the lifestyle village, lifestyle itself is the mythical construct, with retiring baby-boomers and young well-paid suburban dwellers the targets of the villages' designers. If the theme of the city has as its referents the forms of buildings and the image of a well-occupied sidewalk, the thematization of lifestyle incorporates fashion, desire, style, culture, and demographics into this urban image. Building on the psychological-cum-marketing notion of the lifestyle, these "retail concepts" build their narratives around the consumption patterns of a select group of individuals.<sup>5</sup> Early Lifestyle Centers of the 1980s and 1990s were, like early urban entertainment destinations, simply



Figure 7.7  
*A streetscape of  
 Santana Row in San  
 Jose, California;*  
*Streetworks, Inc., BAR  
 Architects, SB Architects.*  
 Photograph courtesy  
 Federal Realty  
 Investment Trust.

restyled malls (Hamilton 2002). But since 2000, influenced by the success of New Urbanist developments which incorporated retail and residential functions, developers have begun to incorporate residential accommodations above strip-mall-like retail establishments, radically (and naïvely) proclaiming the discovery of an age-old mixed-use building type: the apartment above the store.<sup>6</sup>

One of the newest of these villages at the time of writing is Santana Row in San Jose, California (Figure 7.7). Built on the site of an empty “old-style” mall, Santana Row seeks to attract an elite clientèle both to shop and live.<sup>7</sup> Unlike a traditional city, where spontaneous development densities arose from commercial convenience along waterways or trade routes, or at geographically strategic areas for the protection of commerce, the thematized citoid presents an allusion to such narratives in its built form, but overwrites the mercantilist referent with a more provocative commercial conceit. Of course, the commercial argument for the location of this “city” is still present: it is only that the strategic land is not a waterfront but a disused mall in an up-and-coming suburb. Santana Row’s narrative functions doubly: while the story may appear to be clearly about consumption (its architectural design merely adds apartments to a strip-mall), it is rigorously promoted as a place to live independent of shopping. This is expressed clearly by Steve Guttman, the former CEO of Santana Row’s developer, Federal Realty Investment Trust: “The parks are for people who don’t necessarily shop at all. Just come and play chess, play checkers in our park with your family. Enjoy the fountains. We want people to come and get married here”

(Vu 2002). While the new lifestyle villagers may not have everyday grocery stores, religious establishments, or community services, they are provided many of the other experiences of a pedestrian city. Of course, for non-residents to casually play chess or checkers in Santana Row, they would have to drive in, as Santana Row is immersed in the suburban retail belt. The urbanity embodied in Santana Row employs the mass-mediated image of the city to immerse inhabitants into its stylized space of consumption – to provide, in other words, an urban *Experience*. Whether or not there may be any civic function proper is less than important.

In fact, labeling it urban or not seems more academic than critically useful. While playing with programmatic relationships and forms of traditional city organization, the lifestyle village makes no logistical pretense of being an incorporated city – it serves an urban function for those who care, and are authorized, to engage. The lifestyle village is both aleatory city and controlled suburb or perhaps neither. It is its own thing: another step in the economic evolution of living, of the spaces of everyday life, scientized by commercial urban logics and scripted to suit its commercial intent. Its spatial machinations are strategically deployed: to appear secured and commoditized but also public and accessible, to appear stylistically homogeneous but also inclusive of diversity. Mostly, this is handled by its developer's maintenance of exclusively private rights: Federal Realty Investment Trust accepted no public funding, breaks, or considerations specifically because it wanted complete control over on-site behavior (Simonson 2004). (See my discussion of the legal contestations of private ownership, in particular, the wrestling over so-called "state action" that Federal Realty Investment Trust avoided by its exclusive ownership, in Chapter 9.) Its logistical overtures toward an image of publicity thus borrow more from the ownership rights of the enclosed mall than the publicly mediated social contract of the inner-city UED. Any potential ambiguities of agency and authority in the case of this lifestyle village prototype are thus simply washed away. Santana Row, in this respect, represents the commercialized extreme of the company town: the city entirely owned, managed, and policed by a private corporation. But commercialized under the pretenses of the Experience Economy, Santana Row attempts to thematize everyday life itself.

As with Disney's town of Celebration, Florida, the very goal of Santana Row is to attract individuals both to live and shop who fit a particular financial and aesthetic demographic. In the case of Santana Row, the pricing of the apartments (between US\$2,100 and US\$10,000 per month), condominiums (around the US\$1m mark), and the content of the stores (the main grocery store is the exclusive Dean and DeLuca) are clearly narrow in their target population, in the aspiration that visitors', shoppers', and residents' self-selection will follow suit. It is assumed that the demographically targeted tenants themselves are expected to serve as a kind of advertisement for the village and its commercial tenants. For style to become spatial narrative via the realm of social experience, spatial and architectural techniques must corroborate commercial interests

within the subtle tactics of everyday practice. No longer is décor sufficient, nor is the symbolic display of narrative intent, for these can simply be forgotten or dismissed when the themed locale is left behind. Here, the narrative textuality of a space explicitly engages the quotidian actions of its inhabitants. Where the narrative of the theme park operates primarily through its spatial artifacts, the lifestyle village is narratively incomplete without its styled lives. In the Disney theme park, for example, the attire and social customs of the guest (within “reason”) are *prima facie* extra-thematic. But in the lifestyle village, they are themselves a critical component of the narrative. On one hand, the value of a commercial developer’s consideration of social experience can be appreciated: at least it acknowledges the experiencing body of the occupant. But when experience is scripted not to integrate into a way of living, but to hegemonically form a commercially profitable lifestyle, questions regarding the agency of experience come to the fore. How explicitly are the experience-models enforced? Is there room for personal experiential autonomy?

These are the interpersonal implications of what has recently been called “place branding.” This marketing strategy, built on traditional brand management theories, is directed primarily at the branding of locales with high volumes of tourism or of the potential thereof. In a recent issue of the budding discipline’s official research journal *Place Branding*, Bodil Blichfeldt draws from brand management literature to conclude that a “place brand relies on (or supervenes) the people living at that particular place” (2005: 394). Observing that the literature in this area “focuses on marketer’s efforts to *build* and/or *manage* destination images, and hence destination brands” (2005: 395), she concerns herself with the potential to build or manage residents to conform to a place’s brand. While her conclusions differ platonically from many of her contemporaries, who believe in the ability to manage local residents as part of a place-branding strategy, she proposes in the end what amounts perhaps to a more insidious approach toward “internal branding . . . how to get the populace behind it and ‘live the brand’ ” (2005: 399). This is the strategy of the lifestyle village and, as we shall see, other more recent lifestyle-related real-estate “products.” Successful internal branding on this scale promotes a new form of hegemony, one seeking to eliminate so-called “brand gremlins,” those “people, processes and other entities that are out of alignment with the organisation’s overall brand strategy” (Farquhar 2003: 389). By commoditizing a lifestyle, and nurturing its self-promotion on an everyday basis through savvy commercial strategy, the gremlins, “like vehicle wheels out of alignment, sand in the gears of machinery, bugs in a software program, or other recurring glitches” (Farquhar 2003: 389), can be safely accounted for.

In a similar vein, Pine and Gilmore point out with unfailing *double-entendre*: “the customer is the product” (Pine and Gilmore 1999b: 163). The customer’s transformation by an experience is what the Experience Economist should pursue. But as well, with only services (well . . . experiences) to offer, the “transformation elicitor” (Pine and Gilmore 1999b: 181) has only the customer as tangible



good. It is in this vein that the lifestyle villager becomes product. Their transformation, by way of styling their quotidian existence through the symbolic manipulation of their person, is the directed goal of the lifestyle village experience. This is architecturalized at Santana Row not only in the neotraditional styling of its architecture and urban spaces, but even in the detailed control over the public face of its inhabitants. In certain buildings, the ground-level merchants are given the right to dress the residents' windows above their stores, either for advertising or simply to control environmental context (Hamilton 2002: 6). The spatial image of the villagers' domicile is literally styled for them, curtailing self-representation beyond the merchant's brand. This harks back to architect Mies van der Rohe's battle over the window shades in his 1951 Lake Shore Drive Towers in Chicago. His dismissal of the owner's personal window shade choices as aesthetically ruinous to the artfulness of his architectural composition has now been commercially instrumentalized in Santana Row: a modernist art of the corporate logo. In the lifestyle village, all dwelling and occupation is seen as advertising product; everyday life, as everyday lifestyle.

## FROM HOSPITALIZATION TO HOSPITALITY

Other developments on the lifestyle front have led to the rebranding of hospitals and medical clinics as "Lifestyle Enhancement Centers," both a nomenclatural and narrative transformation which surfaced, like the themed UED, in the mid-to-late 1990s.<sup>8</sup> The beneficent intent behind this rebranding is to promote the emotional and therapeutic improvement of the medical experience of a patient. Yet, in the midst of growing competition among private medical care facilities, the continued scientization of built-environment studies, and the commercial propagation of entertainment- and experience-based models, this noble intent is slowly becoming buried behind layers of Experience Economy narrative. David and Beverlie Sloane (2003) document a growing trend to blend medical outreach with commercial services in *Medicine Moves to the Mall*. They trace both the opening of medical centers in shopping malls and the development of a more commercial service model for the provision of medical care to a number of complex causes, from the state of the insurance industry in the US and decentralizing tendencies of medical research labs, to the increasing prescription and use of palliative medicines and the decreased intrusiveness of some surgical procedures. While the history of humanizing (and commercializing) medical care, like most of the phenomena I have studied in this book, is extensive, the Sloanes locate a critical shift in the architecture of medicine in the 1990s. In particular, the 1991 opening of Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center in Hanover, New Hampshire unveiled a new hospital prototype: one based explicitly on the mall.

The staff loves the food court. At Sbarro they can pick up a pizza, while their patients munch on a sandwich from Au Bon Pain. Because Hanover has long prohibited fast food franchises along its picturesque streets, the hospital quickly became a place for

teens to stop for a quick meatball sandwich. A group of “mall rats” even began hanging out at the hospital in the evening, picking up sandwiches from the grocery store and browsing in the bookstore. . . . You can do your banking at the ATM in the small bank branch, drop off your cleaning, pick up a video, have your car serviced, and get a haircut while you wait for your doctor or family member.

(Sloane and Sloane 2003: 86)

As the Sloanes point out, this model was adapted by many contemporary hospitals, either by incorporating mall-style spaces and functions inside them, or by plugging outpatient centers into existing malls themselves. As the mall became increasingly involved in the scripted logics of the *Experience Economy*, it is no surprise that the last decade of the 20th century also saw the merging of the mall's increasing thematism with the hospital-at-the-mall.

The year 1997 represents an important transition in this regard: East Jefferson General Hospital in Metairie, Louisiana, received a “Mouscar” (think “Oscar”) service award from The Walt Disney Company, delivered by an individual in full Mickey Mouse regalia. In the same year, Florida Hospital opened a radically themed Lifestyle Enhancement Center in Disney's new town of Celebration, Florida: Celebration Health. East Jefferson Hospital received the award for exemplifying “the guest relations philosophy [or ‘Guestology’ (Disney 2001)] of Walt Disney World” (Moore 1997: 62). The Disney Institute based in Orlando teaches this philosophy to various industries, but began a specific health-care training unit based on the popularity of its general courses to those in the health-care industries. The hospital “guests” (not patients, in accord with Disney lingo), are treated by first-name-only “cast members” (otherwise known as doctors and nurses) sporting the “EJ [East Jefferson] Look.” “The hospital knows what its patients and neighbors think about men with hoop earrings and women with long decorated fingernails, and it instructs its people accordingly” (Moore 1997: 64). This *show* aspect (one of the Disney Institute's four cardinal principles, along with safety, courtesy, and efficiency (Disney Enterprises 2001: 59)) borrows explicitly from the spatial imaging strategies employed through the Disney theme parks, and has even had an impact on the hospital's interior design. In 1997, the hospital painted skylines on its ceilings so that guests were not staring blankly at acoustic ceiling tile and fluorescent lights. Enough of us have likely had less-than-positive architectural experiences at our local hospitals, so the desire for more thoughtful physical environments is by itself hardly a bad goal. But it is the reliance upon entertainment-industry techniques at the service of this that warrants greater critical attention. Even more so than in the lifestyle village, the fusion here is direct and explicit: Disney's “imagemarketers” (my invented name for the marketing colleagues of the Disney *imagineers*) are training service professionals to emulate the thematic model of the entertainment industry.

By the time it awarded the Mouscar award to East Jefferson Hospital, Disney was near the final steps toward opening a hospital of its own in its town of Celebration. Celebration Health, a branch of the Seventh-Day Adventist Florida

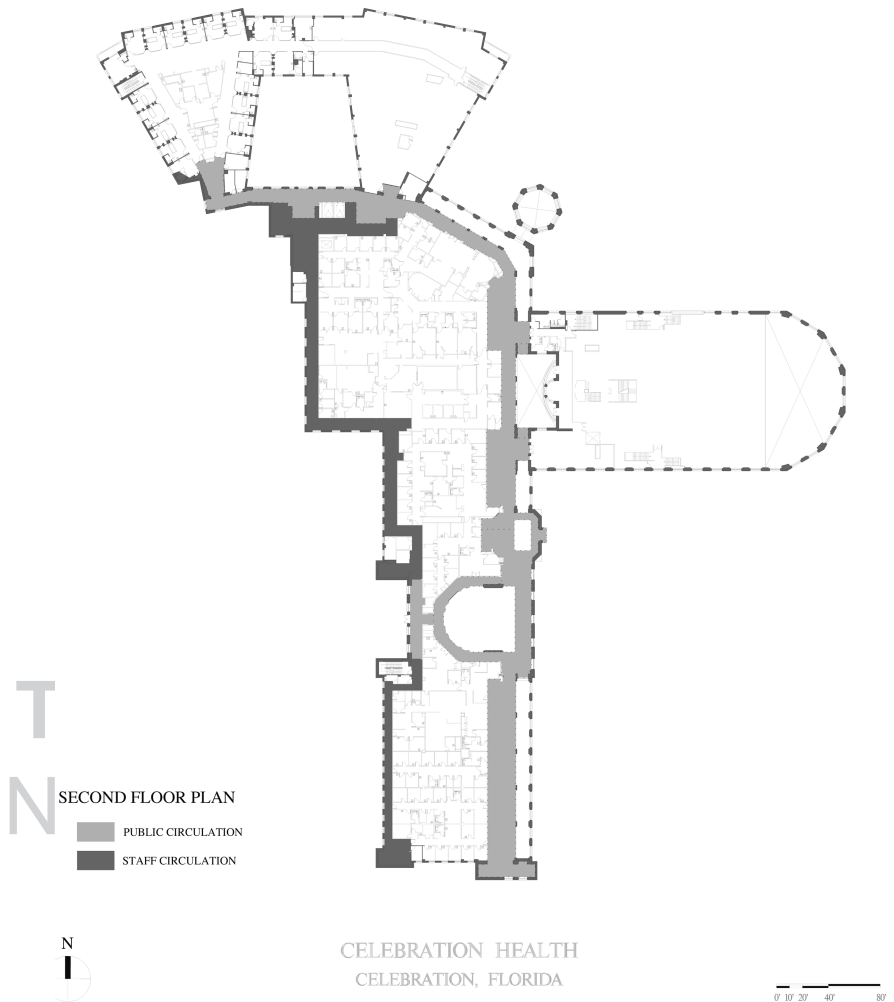


Hospital designed by Robert A. M. Stern Architects,<sup>9</sup> carries the theming of hospitalization further, building upon Disney's service expertise, cinematic experience and architectural design techniques. By building upon a typical theme park's organization, the hospital's design offers a unique example of the extremes of beyond-the-theme-park theming. The thespian logic of the Disney theme park's *front stage* and *back stage* pervades not just the language of internal communications, but also the architectural design of the hospital itself. Celebration Health gets a double-dose of theatricality, influenced by both health-care service trends studied by Pine and Gilmore and its near-neighbor Walt Disney World (both the hospital and the theme park are contained within Disney's 110 square kilometer buffered property). Routinely described in its promotional literature as a place to maintain wellness rather than a place to treat illness ("eliminate negative cues," is one of Pine and Gilmore's six points of progress in the Experience Economy (1999b: 55)), Celebration Health employs this thematic model to defer the presence of hospitalization in favor of its hospitality. The hospital cafeteria is promoted as a public amenity, and the physical therapy facility is incorporated into a day spa for community residents (Ott, 1998; Lassell, 2004: 76; Celebration Fitness, 2006). In order to accommodate the diversity of this functional hybridization, the designers of the hospital doubled its corridor and elevator systems so that Friday evening guests on their way from the spa to the restaurant are unlikely to encounter actual hospital patients (Figure 7.8) (Ott 1998). By architecturally and commercially representing the hospital as a hybrid between hospital and leisure center, its creators constructed the problem of separately managing two clientèles. The architects chose to restrict the overlap of patients and club members through an architectural mediation influenced by the theatrical narrative of the theme park.

Admittedly, were the two functions to overlap in their entirety, the hybrid program would likely be unsustainable. The Lifestyle Enhancement Center's design asserts that neither patients on gurneys waiting for treatment nor fitness buffs on their way from the spa to the restaurant would likely feel too comfortable in each other's presence. Perhaps this may be the case if they are treated typically: the ill patient a subject of an often alienating medical practice, and the spa patron a paying client to be pampered and coddled. While Celebration Health recognizes a socially positive goal – increasing the hospitality of hospitalization – in the end its thematically influenced separation of the ill and the pampered reinforces the status quo. Increasing the hospitality of the hospital by incorporating amenities merely to spatially segregate them along commercial lines (spa membership v. physiotherapy treatment, for example) seems to defeat the purported goal. If all "guests," patients and spa members alike, were pampered equally – medically, therapeutically, and architecturally – then, perhaps, we could have a more hospitable hospital. Perhaps then, lives, as well as lifestyles, might be enhanced.

Consider furthermore, Seaside Imaging, the medical imaging center of Celebration Health, which has gone to the furthest extreme of thematic

Figure 7.8  
*The Second Floor Plan of Celebration Health, highlighting the front-stage/backstage circulation system;*  
 Robert A. M. Stern Architects, with NBBJ.  
 Copyright Robert A. M. Stern Architects.



narration, casting its imaging center as “A Day at the Beach” (Seaside Imaging 2006). Combined with the more visibly subtle architecture of the front- and back-stage double-corridor system, the Imaging Center presents itself as a faithful executor of theme park detailing (Figure 7.9).

From the smell of suntan lotion and ocean spray to the soothing sounds of breaking waves and seagulls, this is standard fare for Seaside Imaging. Beneath our unique sand castle lies our newest diagnostic tool, the advanced GE SIGNA twin-speed MRI, the first in central Florida.

(Seaside Imaging 2006)

The multi-sensory atmosphere of the imaging department includes a boardwalk floor, barium drinks served with paper umbrellas, Adirondack waiting chairs, and Hawaiian shirts in lieu of gowns. Perhaps most visually striking are the MRI machines made into plastic sand castles. “I wanted to do similar [*sic*] to what



Figure 7.9  
*The themed MRI machine at Seaside Imaging, Celebration Health.*  
 Photograph courtesy Celebration Health.

Disney does; when you go to one of their theme parks, it affects all of your senses," claims Sally Grady, director of imaging services at Celebration Health and one of the ideologues behind the theming (Cohen 2005). The MRI machines were first "dressed up" to improve the attendance rate of Seaside Imaging's MRI appointments. After the thematic redesign, cancellations decreased 50 percent, attesting to the increased desire of "guests" to partake in the narrative experience (Florida Hospital 2001). Building on this success, the nuclear medicine waiting area was renovated to appear like a movie theater, complete with popcorn machine and theater seating. And in a historical coup loaded with gender politics, the mammography area is done up like a proper English tea room (gazebo included). MRI patients exiting their changing cabanas to enter the sand castle – that is, the imaging machine – encounter another Disney-invented technology, "Buddy," the audio-animatronic bear, which describes the MRI process. While Buddy's intent is to help comfort children who are themselves going through the process of medical imaging, the opportunity for product tie-ins has not been lost, with Buddy paraphernalia given to childhood patients as a gesture of corporate brand-loyalty (Cohen 2005). In Seaside Imaging, a desire for hospitality has uncritically turned into an opportunity to exemplify Disney-style theming. Undoubtedly, experiences had at this imaging center would be memorable, but do these experiences continue to perform a medical function, or have they shifted to the more fundamental branding functions of the Experience Economy? Are these thematic ventures designed to treat the somatic conditions

of the patient, or the equally vexing ones of the brand gremlin? There is a clear value to providing some levity and distraction for a child approaching an MRI visit, or providing some serious architectural consideration of a waiting-room experience. There may even be some value to the humor of a more extreme gesture like the decoration of an MRI machine as a sand castle. But to what extent does the improvement of medical experience necessarily connect with theme-park theming? At what point does the narrative offer comfort and at what point does it disguise treatment or alienate the patient seeking to be more in touch with their condition?

What is most significant about these thematic efforts is their potent ability to elide obvious narratives of control. As a postmodern narrative space, the site of lifestyle enhancement revolves around the idea of branded experience. While the link between the hospital and the Walt Disney Company may on one hand be merely geographic, the establishment of entertainment content within the town of Celebration both reinforces the Disney brand and relies on its putative happiness. Most profoundly, as with the lifestyle village, this is accomplished (at least apparently) through self-fulfillment rather than commercial dictate. The developers of Celebration were once frightfully concerned that the town's residents would expect Disney perfection in their everyday lives: "those [Disney aficionados] are the people who think their kids will never get a B in school and there is never going to be a weed in their lawn when they move to Celebration" (Frantz and Collins 2000: 35). But in the end, the residents have proven to be more self-policing (thematically) than Disney managers originally expected.<sup>10</sup> The Walt Disney Company had no direct design involvement in Seaside Imaging; it was an autonomous decision motivated by the very idea of being in Celebration. This classic form of Gramscian hegemony has led to some of the more interesting and significant thematic environments outside of the theme park. Where central control over a manifest theme has become more difficult because of the "gremlins" of everyday life, willing participants are happy to take on the policing role. Through the self-fulfillment of the thematic narrative, designers, developers, residents, and others are promoting a model of narrative control as a comfortable and productive model for everyday life. While personal narrative is a powerful motivating force for an individual, the standardization and hegemonic promotion of an authorized narrative have the potential to deaden an individual's ability to construct their own everyday narrative.<sup>11</sup> The Disney narrative impetus has directly affected those who subscribe to the Celebration model, and they are comfortable, even exuberant, about promoting it as the authorized narrative about their town and the kinds of livelihoods and/or lifestyles which are acceptable within it. This appears to be the case especially when this self-constitution of narrative supports a desired experience for which the ground has already been laid. Recall that the purported outcome of the Experience Economy is the transformation economy ("the customer is the product"), wherein economic progress is made through the instillation of the belief of personal transformation. Jeans are not "just bought," a lifestyle is achieved through the *transformation*

of one's image. Likewise, an MRI exam is not "just had," a healthy lifestyle is achieved through the transformation of a guest's frame of mind through a distracting spatial experience. The thematization of the hospital falls into this category of self-induced narrativity – where negative cues of "illness" are reconstituted as positive cues of "leisure" through tremendous narrative work.

But, there is a point to the MRI beyond distraction, beyond entertainment. Especially in the case of Celebration Health, one might expect there to be conflict between an entertainment-based model of treatment, and the more holistic beliefs of the Adventist directors of the center. The church has maintained a long-held belief in promoting health and well-being as a central part of its mission. Many of their beliefs are shared with, or closely approximate those of the holistic health movement. Both holistic health and lifestyle enhancement, for example, encourage a focus on wellness over illness, in attending to a positive outlook on health, and in enabling good health to come from the individual (Miles 1985; Ullman 1985). But there are significant contradictions as well, and it is these contradictions, posed somewhere between holistic health and brand management, that are both the most vexing and most interesting about Celebration Health. Where the positive experience of wellness may be a shared ideal, it seems that obtaining this via the narrative distraction from embodied symptoms (MRI machines dressed up like sand castles) is at tremendous odds with a holistic approach. Positive outlooks on health in the holistic approach would see symptoms, disease, or illness as important markers of imbalance; their positive "value" comes from sensing them, and understanding what they might mean. In Celebration, positive outlooks come via "The Happiest Place on Earth," where positivity is an end in itself. Audio-animatronics and suntan lotion scents are provided as "treatments" (both medical and thematic) which distract from one's attendance to the bodily signals which contribute to a more holistic healing process. The experience of Celebration Health is fundamentally palliative, presenting a commercialized western medical approach under the guise of a holistic experience. It is an experience, to be sure, but is it an experience grounded in healing, or in distraction? Of empowering through knowledge or in removing the need for knowledge altogether? Of confronting medical reality or in aesthetically dismissing its realization? In the end, it appears that the "hospitalization" experience of Celebration Health, while putatively based on a progressive medical practice, is unable to escape the commercialized focus on "lifestyle." It extends, at least in this regard, the project of the lifestyle village from the domain of consumption into the domain of recuperation, borrowing the model of E-factored leisure from the world of retail. Has entertainment, in this case, become a form of healing – or healing, a form of entertainment? When nuclear medicine patients receive their dosages, becoming radioactive and perhaps powerfully ill, do they return to the screening room? And what about that pervasive smell of popcorn? It is potently and perhaps frighteningly unclear where medicine ends and entertainment begins.

This question takes on even greater significance in another medical appli-

cation of entertainment-based theming: Alzheimer's care. Recently refigured as "Memory Care Centers," Alzheimer's care facilities have, since about 1990, begun to consider the advantages of non-pharmacological treatments for the care of Alzheimer's disease (Zeisel and Raia 2000). There are two main arguments behind this approach. First, the disease directly affects the regions of the brain theorized to be associated with environmental memory and spatial way-finding, and second, many of the neurological effects of the disease are believed to be "treatable" by improving the physical environment of the patient (Zeisel 2000). While the former argument has been part of the scientific knowledge of Alzheimer's physiological progression for some time, a number of scientific studies from the late 1980s began to investigate the relationship between the care environment and patient behavior (Frank 1985; Lawton 1989). An important study in 2003, examining 30 Alzheimer's Special Care Units (physically distinct areas of care centers specifically devoted to Alzheimer's care) presents results of positive associations between specific environmental conditions and residents' non-aggressive and non-depressive mental states (Zeisel *et al.* 2003: 697). As a result of these studies, a number of environmental factors, including highly visible landmarks, clear pathways, commodious social spaces, concealed exits, and a so-called "residential aesthetic" are heavily weighted architectural devices conceived to improve a care environment. To an architect, it is unsurprising that there are positive correlations between well-designed spatial environments and positive feelings. But there is well-designed and there is ... well, designed.

In 1996, the Clare Bridge Senior Living Home opened in Dublin, Pennsylvania; in 1998, the Corumbene Nursing Home for the Aged opened in New Norfolk, Tasmania; and in 2001, the Village at Waveny Care Center opened in New Canaan, Connecticut, each carrying a bit more extremely the thematic environmental design of the Alzheimer's special care unit. These three centers focused upon the fact that Alzheimer's sufferers, while unable to retain events in short-term memory, can recall memories of distant years. By cuing in to what we would conventionally call nostalgia, and understanding the value of smart environmental design on the quality of care, the designers of these three clinics looked to the same precedents as the lifestyle village and lifestyle enhancement center: the Disney theme park's "Main Street U.S.A." and the CityWalk-style Urban Entertainment District (Baldwin 2002). Originally designed by Aldrian Guskowski Architects for the assisted living management company Alterra (now incorporated into Brookdale Senior Living), the Clare Bridge model provides a central social space rendered to appear as an outdoor small-town town square. Rendered in carpet patterns, painted wall surfaces, mock storefronts, and outdoor furniture, the town square is provided to offer a calming gathering space modeled on the urban environments familiar to many of the residents from their childhood. The storefront windows serve as places to spotlight a resident's collection of memorabilia, as well as to mask the visibility of the center's offices. As well, in the words of Bernie Cavis, the Director of Dementia Product Line





Figure 7.10  
The franchised “Town Center” design of Clare Bridge Memory Care Center; Aldrian Guskowski Architects. Photograph courtesy Brookdale Senior Living.

Management at Brookdale Senior Living, this simulated outdoor environment “would give a sense of arrival or of having gone somewhere” (Cavis 2007), important for dementia sufferers often confused by their daily paths or seeking an exit from their everyday environment. The Corumbene Nursing Home (Figure 7.11) takes thematic design to the next level of nostalgic immersion, building on geographically and historically specific narratives to reconstruct a traditional hop farm and farming village out of recycled *oast houses* (kilns used for drying hops in preparation for brewing) (Falconer 2001). In this latter case, the representations are not merely aesthetic: the center provides a functional outhouse, and provides residents with activities emulating the tasks of a traditional hop farm. Current residents would have grown up in or around these farms, and the reconstructions as well as the specific siting of the center are meant to provide comfort in the symbolism of a distant past. Any hop-farming work done at the center is nevertheless simulated: daily reenactments of work exclusively for the mental comfort of dementia-sufferers (Figure 7.12). In an odd connection between entertainment and medical theming, such a re-creational practice takes on a similar form to the gastronomically futile production of cheese at Huis Ten Bosch. In both cases, symbolic actions are staged for a version of mental therapy: either to calm a dementia sufferer or to bemuse a tourist. At The Village at Waveny, designers most closely approximated the themed leisure model, finding architectural inspiration in photographs not only of mid-century downtowns but, in the words of one of its design consultants, of “reproduction streets in shopping malls, Disney World, and even a casino in upstate Connecticut” (Baldwin 2002: F1) (Figure 7.13). The central area of this facility is thus an ersatz downtown

Figure 7.11  
*The renovated oast  
 houses of Corumbene  
 Center; Robert Morris  
 Nunn Architects.*  
 Photograph courtesy  
 Richard Eastwood and  
 Robert Morris Nunn  
 Architects.



New Canaan, circa 1950, designed to comfort residents by providing familiar images from their youth. While the designers of the Waveny Village may be the only one among these three memory care center projects to explicitly admit their Disneyesque roots, there is a growing coalescence of work on environmental design for dementia with the theoretical motivations that underlay the late 20th-century theme park, the UED, and the lifestyle village.

A key figure promoting these architectural developments since the early 1990s is John Zeisel. His early work in “applying” applied sociology to design resulted in the 1981 publication *Inquiry by Design*. In it, Zeisel lays out a scientific methodology for environment–behavior (E–B) research: to provide a verifiable method for understanding the relationship between a physical environment and the behavior which results from it. Unsurprisingly, due in no small part to his background in quantitative sociology, *Inquiry by Design* is highly influenced by the scientific strain of spatial research mentioned earlier. A recent profile of Zeisel precisely attributes the design of one of the care centers he commissioned to “the principles of urban planner Kevin Lynch and architect Chris Alexander” (Shaw 1998), two key figures we have seen to be instrumental in this area. Since 1993, he has been the President and co-founder of Hearthstone





Figure 7.12  
*An interior corridor of  
 Corumbene Center;  
 Robert Morris Nunn  
 Architects.*  
 Photograph copyright  
 David Stephenson,  
 courtesy Julie Saul  
 Gallery, New York.

Alzheimer Care, Ltd., a set of assisted-living centers for Alzheimer's patients, where he has been putting his design ideas to the test. In practice, Zeisel's main influences in the design arena appear to be Kevin Lynch and Donald Norman, the latter a cognitive scientist who takes the design environment as his subject matter. From Lynch, Zeisel borrows the idea of environmental images, and from Norman, the idea of "natural mappings" to form his theory of the "naturally mapped environment." He slips between Tolman's cognitive map, Lynch's mental map and Norman's natural map, finding from each the most empirical observations in order to construct highly scientized and perceptually controlled environments. "A naturally mapped environment doesn't have to be read, it speaks for itself ... you always know exactly where you are going, either



Figure 7.13  
*The recreated historical New Canaan in The Village at Waveny Alzheimer's center; Reese Lower Patrick & Scott, architects.*  
 Photograph courtesy Larry Lefever Photography.

because you see it or you have only one choice" (Shaw 1998). By extrapolating Norman's argument of natural mappings from *The Design of Everyday Things* (2002) to the scale of the environment, Zeisel makes the critical (and I believe, ethically problematic) assumption that what may be good for the object is good for the environment. Donald Norman's classic example is the door. He argues

There is not much you can do to a door: you can open it or shut it. . . . A door poses only two essential questions: In which direction does it move? On which side should one work it? The answers should be given by the design, without any need for symbols, certainly without any need for trial and error.

(Norman 2002: 3)

While I respect Norman's argument for thoughtfully designed objects, I imagine a world designed by his standards to be phenomenally unstimulating. Nothing would require curiosity, as it would have been so clearly designed as to avoid study. Object interaction decisions would fundamentally disappear, as there would no longer be any ambiguity to the way something may be used. But even if every object in the world were designed along these lines, we would still have the

freedoms of spatial ambiguity. The mere assembly of the multitudes of things in the world, at different scales, used for different purposes, by different individuals and cultures, would create the opportunity for the ambiguities and complexities of everyday life that make for the social diversity and heterogeneity that keep us thinking. But a naturally mapped environment, an environment which always “speaks for itself,” where you “have only one choice,” removes even this. It is an environment of complete narrative control: the environment presents only one theme, that chosen or authorized by its designers. Alternative inhabitations, while not impossible, are severely curtailed, if not through direct proscription, then simply by being intrinsically dismissed as unthematic anomalies – Farquhar’s “brand gremlins.”

What makes the study of environments deployed for the care and support of Alzheimer’s sufferers challenging is that the argument for environmental control is quite ethically persuasive. In lieu of physically restraining patients or sedating their behavior, providing the patient with a range of smartly designed, controlled spatial freedoms seems not only more humane but outright liberative. Spatial proscription in this case is not so much a means of control, but of a small dose of liberation within a debilitating disease. The question nonetheless remains whether such spatial controls need to be accomplished through entertainment-industry scripting. Consider the other side of such scripting: the explicit construction of an other, a so-called brand gremlin or thematic anomaly that results from a strictly controlled narrative environment. The 1950s downtown of New Canaan Connecticut was most assuredly neither race-inclusive nor gender-equitable. One simply needs to ask about those who would not be comforted by images of a Rockwellian (Norman, that is, not David<sup>12</sup>) pre-civil-rights era downtown to question the inclusiveness of a standardized narrative. The designers of this white middle-class design narrowly focused on the narrative elements borrowed from mass-media representations of an idyllic town (and even representations of such representations). By reifying one particular image of, or better, one particular point of view upon, the American mid-20th-century main street as a palliative instrument, they have demographically located medical treatment for dementia sufferers. The same mid-century barber-shop which a Caucasian patient would find comforting, an African-American might find distasteful because it may have been “Whites only” in their distant memories. What happens as generations pass? Will they renovate Waveny’s simulated main street, then board it up, or suburbanize it and put in a Wal-Mart? Or will there be Alzheimer’s special care units for ethnic minorities, modeled on places of comfort which might be outside the Norman Rockwell image of the US, explicitly and thematically ghettoizing medical care? While these developments are unlikely, what their potential reveals is that the historical images employed in these centers refer less to specifically historical moments than to a generalized “historical image” we can all accept, regardless of our age, ethnicity, cultural identity, or gender. Should I require the services of The Village at Waveny in another forty years, I will only be familiar with the image of the image of the historical

downtown. Yet, somehow, I am expected to find comfort in that. To use Disney's Main Street U.S.A. or Foxwoods Resort Casino (the casino in upstate Connecticut referred to by Waveny's design consultant) as design motivation for a terminal care clinic is not to merely replicate aesthetic décor, but to replicate the spatialization of control, and the social and political implications thereof. Within the context of a medical care facility, borrowing from Disney and borrowing from geriatric psychiatry seem altogether different. The former entails an engagement with spatial practices that are not about medical support or recovery, but about consumption and subservience along class and race-based lines. A special 2003 issue of the *Journal of Architecture and Planning Research* (Shepley and McCormick 2003) devoted to therapeutic environments, for example, goes to great pains to stress the use of the word "consumers" to describe center owners and architects ("intermediate consumers") and patients ("end consumers"). While the consumerization of medical care is rapidly advancing, not all special care units are following the thematic trend; recall that the general principles laid out by medical researchers (including Zeisel) do not call explicitly for thematic décor. No clear data, however, is available on how pervasive the theming of hospitals or dementia care centers may be. What appears to be clear, however, is the medical literature's support of the evolution from the Experience Economy to the transformation economy.

What is perhaps most enlightening about the confluence of the Experience Economy, its thematic design logic, and dementia treatment is the commentary it provides on the very spatial qualities of theming itself. It took nearly fifty years after the opening of Disneyland to have a scientific researcher describe the themed environment (specifically, the naturally mapped environment) as "being [so] self-evident, [that] it compensates for neurological losses" (Zeisel 2000: 28). Narrative theming, as either leisure fantasy or medical treatment, is finally acknowledged to have a specifically palliative function. Whether there are actual neurological losses involved in a trip to Disneyland or your local lifestyle village is another story, but there seems nothing particularly surprising that at least the emulation of such loss may be at play. As Frantz and Collins (2000: 21) ask about Celebration, "Was Celebration selling nostalgia or peddling amnesia?" Participation in a spatial narrative does require the suspension of some belief; and it does seem reasonable to say that this suspension is mostly a suspension of some version of short-term memory. Entering the gates of a theme park, immersing yourself in an interiorized casino complex, or leaving your car behind in a suburban lifestyle village entails a temporary immersion in a story that has nothing to do with what is beyond its architectural boundaries. These forms of entertainment, leisure, and consumption are escapes, where neurological function is deferred at the service of enjoyment. Ostensibly, this is done at the service of liberation from the "other" constraints on everyday life. This deferral can be seen as the very core of the *différance* of thematic experience – the always-ongoing deferral and displacement of meaning. The textuality of the thematic environment, from theme park to Alzheimer's clinic, employs these deferrals to script a

set of constraints on our spatial behavior. Deferred memories – the recollection of the space “outside” the themed environment or of what activity took place just moments before – are blended, and the pursuit of any “true” meanings becomes futile. In the domain of medical treatment, we are given a clear window into the cognitive effects of the scripted space. The control mechanism of narrative theming is, in a way, exposed. Its symbolic manipulations of the spatial environment are no less strategically deployed than in the theme park, but we are given a kind of access to it as we witness, potentially, the onset of cancer in the case of the imaging center, or dementia in the case of the Alzheimer’s special care unit. We are, in witnessing the environmentally medicated “other,” witnessing ourselves, equally environmentally medicated, albeit for other ends. Whether meandering at Disneyland, along CityWalk, through Santana Row, in Seaside Imaging, or at the Waveny Village, we are partaking in a contemporary form of architecturally institutionalized leisure-work – a profoundly radical kind of spatial landscape which requires new tactics of inhabitation, new theories toward dwelling, and new attitudes toward illness.

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